

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA POUCH

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USINT BAGHDAD POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 3095

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP (MCGOVERN, GEORGE)

SUBJECT: CODEL MCGOVERN VISIT TO EGYPT

1. SUMMARY: SENATOR MCGOVERN HAD APPARENTLY FRUITFUL, THOUGH ABBREVIATED, VISIT TO CAIRO. HE WAS FIRST MEMBER OF CONGRESS TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT SADAT, SPEAKER MAR'I AND PRIMMIN HEGAZI AFTER SUSPENSION OF DISENGAGEMENT NEGOTIATIONS. HE WAS TOLD A) SECRETARY'S EFFORTS WERE APPRECIATED; B) EGYPT'S GOOD RELATIONS WITH US WOULD CONTINUE; C) ISRAEL WAS SOLELY TO BLAME FOR BREAKDOWN; D) EGYPTIANS WILL NOW GO TO GENEVA, BUT WANT US TO PLAY ROLE IN INFLUENCING ISRAELIS. EGYPTIANS WERE CRITICAL OF USSR AND CONCERNED OVER DILEMMA SOVIET ROLE WOULD CAUSE FOR THEM AT GENEVA. CODEL MCGOVERN ALSO ARRANGED PRIVATE MEETING WITH PLO REPS AND SEEMED WELL SATISFIED WITH RESULTS OF VISIT UPON DEPARTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. CODEL MCGOVERN VISITED EGYPT MAR 22-24. ORIGINAL SCHEDULE, WHICH INCLUDED TRIP TO ASWAN TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT SADAT AND FONMIN FAHMY WAS CANCELLED WHEN SADAT ANNOUNCED CONFIDENTIAL

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HE WOULD RETURN TO CAIRO AFTER COLLAPSE OF DISENGAGEMENT TALKS.

A SECOND SCHEDULED MEETING WITH SADAT, THIS TIME IN CARIO, WAS AGAIN POSTPONED WHEN PRESIDENT'S PLANE COULD NOT LAND DUE TO SANDSTORM. DESPITE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN ADHERING TO SCHEDULE, MCGOVERN WAS ABLE TO MEET WITH SPEAKER OF PEOPLES ASSEMBLY SAID MAR'I, PRIMMIN HEGAZI, AND BY DELAYING HIS DEPARTURE FOUR HOURS, FINALLY WITH PRESIDENT SADAT (REPORTED SEPTTEL). CODEL WAS THUS EXPOSED TO EGYPTIAN INITIAL REACTION TO SUSPENSION OF PEACE TALKS. NOT ONLY DID HE OBTAIN VIEWS OF EGYPT'S TOP THREE OFFICIALS, BUT DURING DINNER IN HIS HONOR BY PEOPLES ASSEMBLY HE HAD AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR OPINIONS OF KEY PARLIAMENTARIANS.

3. CODEL MCGOVERN SAW SPEAKER MAR'I MAR 23 DURING A CALL AT PEOPLES ASSEMBLY AND LATER AT SMALL DINNER HOSTED BY MAR'I WITH LEADING PA MEMBERS, SUCH AS DEP SPEAKER OTEIFI AND FONRELS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN GOMAA PRESENT. MAR'I REVIEWED ABORTIVE NEGOTIATIONS IN GENERAL TERMS, NOTING GOE HAD GONE AS FAR AS IT COULD, BUT EXPRESSING DOUBT THAT ISRAELIS, WITH POSSIBLE FAVORABLE OUTCOME FOR THEM OF US ELECTIONS IF OFFING, HAD SOME WILLINGNESS TO REACH AGREEMENT. NOW SOVIET POSITION WAS STRENGTHENED AND GENEVA CONFERENCE ONLY ALTERNATIVE. THESE VIEWS AND, PARTICULARLY, DILEMMA RAISED BY EXPECTED SOVIET RE-ENTRY INTO PICTURE AND CLAIM TO BE ONLY TRUE DEFENDER OF ARAB CAUSE, WERE ECHOED BY PA DINNER PARTICIPANTS. MAR'I EMPHASIZED EGYPT COULD NOT ACCEPT "NO WAR, NO PEACE" SITUATION.

4. CODEL MCGOVERN EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR MODERATE POSITION EGYPTIAN LEADERSHIP HAD TAKEN ON ME PROBLEM. HE TOLD MAR'I THERE WOULD BE DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT IN CONGRESS OVER NEGOTIATIONS FAILURE, BUT THOUGHT THAT CONGRESS WOULD NOT BLAME EITHER SIDE. IN RESPONSE TO HIS QUERY AS TO EFFECT BREAKDOWN OF TALKS WOULD HAVE ON US-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS, MAR'I SAID THEY WOULD REMAIN GOOD, BUT DOUBTED THERE WOULD BE AN ESCALATION IN THIS RELATIONSHIP.

5. IN REFERENCE TO MART'S ROLE IN WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE, DISCUSSION TURNED TO QUESTION OF DIFFICULT TIME EGYPT WAS HAVING WITH HIGH COMMODITY PRICES. IN SHARP CONTRAST, HOWEVER, COTTON MARKET WAS VERY BAD AND EGYPT HAD SO FAR SOLD ONLY 20 PERCENT OF ITS COTTON. MAR'I INDICATED EGYPT WAS IN FAVOR OF COMMODITY
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PRICE ARRANGEMENTS, WHICH HE KNEW US OPPOSED.

6. CODEL MEETING WITH PRIMMIN HEGAZI WAS VERY CORDIAL AND CONCENTRATED ON GENERAL DISCUSSION OF EGYPTIAN ECONOMIC SITUATION, INCLUDING CONTROLLING INFLATION RATE (3PERCENT LAST YEAR) AND FOOD PRICES THROUGH GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES TOTALLING LE 640 MILLION.

MCGOVERN EXPLAINED WORKING OF FOOD STAMP PLAN IN WHICH HEGAZI

EXPRESSED SOME INTEREST.

7. HEGAZI ALSO COMMENTED ON SITUATION ARISING FROM FAILURE OF DISENGAGEMENT NEGOTIATIONS, NOTING RESULTS HAD DASHED OPTIMISTIC EGYPTIAN HOPES AND MENTIONING MANY POINTS MADE BY MART AND HIS COLLEAGUES. HEGAZI CALLED ON US TO CONTINUE TO TRY TO INFLUENCE ISRAELIS. SENATOR NOTED THAT UNDUE PRESSURE MIGHT HAVE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE EFFECT, MAKING ISREALIS MORE STUBBORN (A POINT HE MADE SEVERAL TIMES TO GOE OFFICIALS). IN RESPONSE TO HIS QUERY, HAGAZI SAID HE BELIEVED EGYPT WOULD NOT REJECT UNEF.

8. CODEL PRIVATELY ARRANGED BREAKFAST MAR 24 WITH TWO PLO REPRESENTATIVES WHOSE NAMES THEY SEEMED UNWILLING TO DIVULGE TO EMBASSY. SENATOR DID NOTE THAT, WHILE PLO REPS WERE VERY SERIOUS MEN, THEIR RADICAL APPROACH TO ME PROBLEMS CONTRASTED MARKEDLY WITH MODERATE EGYPTIAN VIEWS HEARD PREVIOUS EVENING AT DINNER.

9. CODEL MCGOVERN INDICATED VISIT, DESPITE ONLY FEW, BUT HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT CONTACTS IN THEIR ABBREVIATED SCHEDULE, WAS FRUITFUL. CODEL WAS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED TO HAVE BEEN FIRST OFFICIAL AMERICAN VISITORS EXPOSED TO HIGH-LEVEL EGYPTIANS AFTER END OF DISENGAGEMENT NEGOTIATIONS. ALL OFFICIALS EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER'S EFFORTS AND LIAD BLAME AT ISRAEL'S,

NOT HIS, DOOR. SENATOR WAS FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY SINCERITY AND REASONABLENESS OF SADAT'S ATTITUDE DURING THEIR MEETING, WHICH HE CONSIDERED HIGH POINT OF VISIT.
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